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BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

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The six hundred and sixty-seventh meeting of the Club was held at the Criterion in Piccadilly, London, W.1 on Tuesday, 17th November, 1970, at 7 p.m.

Chairman: Dr. J. F. Monk; present: 10 members and 2 guests.

Mr. Murray Williams spoke to the Club about New Zealand Waterfowl Research and Conservation. His address was illustrated by photographic slides and was followed by a film about the waterfowl of Lake Ellesmere.

The meeting was preceded by a Special General Meeting of the Club.

Minutes of a Special General Meeting held at the Criterion in Piccadilly, London, W.1 on Tuesday, 17th November, 1970, at 6.30 p.m.

Chairman: Dr. J. F. Monk; present: 10 members.

The Chairman explained that the cost of printing the *Bulletin* has been increased twice during 1970 and that as the Club's finances for the year were expected to show a deficit on income-and-expenditure account without allowing for these increases, the Committee considered that there was no alternative to an increase in the amount of the subscription to be paid by members. Economies had been considered and some will be adopted but these are likely to make marginal savings only. The Chairman pointed out that at the last annual general meeting the Hon. Treasurer had warned members that an increase would have soon to be considered. The Committee had considered leaving the question until the annual general meeting in 1971, but this would have meant that no increase could take effect until 1972. The Committee did not consider that the Club's interests would be well served by allowing another larger deficit to be incurred next year. The Committee therefore proposed the resolution set out in the Notice of meeting as a resolution in terms of Rule (14) of the Club's Rules.

After a short discussion the resolution was agreed without dissent as follows:—

"That with effect from 1st January, 1971, the annual subscription shall be £2 10*s*. and that Rule (4) shall be amended accordingly".

The meeting closed at 6.50 p.m.

A new species of *Melaenornis* (Muscicapinae) from Liberia

by A. D. Forbes-Watson

Received 29th October, 1970

This is the first in a series of papers on the ornithological results of the survey initiated by the IUCN Nimba Research Committee on the ecology of the Mt. Nimba area in Liberia, West Africa.

In lowland forest at the foot of the mountain specimens were collected of a flycatcher sufficiently distinct from its congeners to be described as a new species. I take great pleasure in naming it after my wife:

Melaenornis annamarulae sp. nov.

Type: Deposited in the British Museum (Natural History) No. 1969–25–1; adult ♂; Grassfield, Mt. Nimba, Liberia (7° 30′ N, 8° 35′ W); altitude *c.* 550 metres a.s.l.; 12th August 1967; collector A. D. Forbes-Watson; collector's No. FWNB 716.

Measurements of Type: Wing (flattened) 108 mm.; tail 79.5; culmen (to base) 16.5, (exposed) 14; tarsus 22; weight 41.9 gm.

Colours of soft parts of Type: Iris dark brown; rim of eyelid black; bill black; feet black, soles dull creamy.

Description: A large robust flycatcher, very uniform in colour. It is bluer than other *Melaenornis* spp., and it differs from them significantly in structural details and in its ecology.

The upperparts are uniform "blackish plumbeous" (Ridgway's *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*, Washington 1912: Plate LII). The underparts, including underwing coverts, are uniform "slate grey" (*ibid.* Plate LIII); the throat is the same but appears slightly paler due to a slight disintegration of the feather barbs. The lores are slightly dusky. The rectrices and remiges are blackish washed with "blackish plumbeous" on the outer webs.

The tail is very slightly rounded, the difference between the longest and shortest retrices being *c.* 4 mm. The rictal bristles are fairly well-developed but not very strong, similar to those of other *Melaenornis* spp. The bill is strong and slightly hooked at the tip, and is stubbier and heavier-looking than those of the other species. The feet and toes are fairly strong, as in the others. Compared with the other species the tail is proportionately shorter.

A coloured plate of this bird by Cmdr. A. M. Hughes will be published in the final report on the birds of Nimba (Forbes-Watson in prep.).

Other material: 10 further specimens (six adult ♂♂ and four adult ♀♀) were collected in the same locality by Forbes-Watson in 1968; these are here designated paratypes. In all particulars they agree exactly with the (holo-) type. The sexes are alike. The following table gives details of all the specimens—measurements are in mm. and weights in gm:

Coll. no.	*Date*	*Sex*	*Wing*	*Tail*	*Culmen*	*Tarsus*	*Weight*
Holotype	1967						
FWNB 716	12 Aug	♂	108	79.5	16.5	22	41.9
Paratypes	1968						
FWNB 1260	24 Jan	♂	109	78.0	17.0	23	37.4
1261	24 Jan	♀	102	77.0	17.0	24	37.0
1262	24 Jan	♀	104	77.0	17.0	22	37.2
1850	11 June	♂	107	77.5	17.0	22	38.0
2020	31 July	♀	104	76.0	17.0	21	42.3
2045	6 Aug	♂	101	77.0	17.5	23	40.0
2050	7 Aug	♂	105	76.5	17.0	23	40.4
2051	7 Aug	♀	102	81.0	17.0	24	42.3
2303	2 Oct	♂	106	81.0	19.5	23	40.3
2311	4 Oct	♂	103	80.0	18.0	23	42.0

Range of measurements (seven ♂♂, four ♀♀):
wing ♂♂ 101–109 (av.106); ♀♀ 102–104 (103)
tail ♂♂ 76.5–81 (78); ♀♀ 76–81 (78)
culmen ♂♀ 16.5–19.5; tarsus ♂♀ 21–24
weight ♂♂ 37.4–42.0 (40.0); ♀♀ 37.0–42.3 (39.7)
wing/tail ♂♂ 1.29–1.40 (1.35); ♀♀ 1.26–1.37 (1.33)

The wing/tail ratio for *Melaenornis* spp. (*sensu stricto*) and the two "*Fraseria*" spp. are *M. annamarulae* seven ♂♂ four ♀♀ 1.34, *M. ardesiaca* ♀ 1.11, *M. edolioides* three ♂♂ three ♀♀ 1.13, *M. pammelaina* seven ♂♂ three ♀♀ 1.20, "*F.*" *cinerascens* ♂ two ♀♀ 1.21, "*F.*" *ocreata* 10 ♂♂ six ♀♀ 1.22.

Habitat: All those collected and about 20 others seen were invariably in primary lowland forest at the foot of Mt. Nimba, and were never observed on the slopes, even though this is similar forest. They were definitely birds of the interior of the forest and were never seen near the forest edge.

Voice and Habits: Although usually silent, they would at times utter rather strident loud calls reminiscent of those other members of the genus, and not at all unlike certain calls of *Fraseria ocreata* and drongos *Dicrurus* spp.

They frequented the highest parts of the trees and were often seen perching conspicuously above the closed canopy; at other times they were seen foraging and moving through the tree-tops just below the canopy. At no time were they seen below *c.* 20 metres from the ground, and they were more usually above 30 metres.

Sometimes seen in pairs, they were more often in groups of four to six (like *F. ocreata* and unlike other species of *Melaenornis*, *sensu stricto*). They might remain in one general vicinity for long periods and, like other forest species, they could often be found in a circumscribed locality for several days in succession. They were not very active and the groups would move slowly through the tree-tops, feeding as they went. Fairly long inactive periods would be spent when they were very easily overlooked.

In a good light they would appear bluish-grey, but more often would be silhouetted against the sky when they could easily be mistaken for *Dicrurus ludwigii*. It is suggested that this species may well have been overlooked elsewhere due to the similarity between the species.

Definite indications of breeding were obtained from an examination of the gonads of the four females collected. In both those collected on 24th January (i.e. at the driest season) they were quiescent; that of 7th August had an ovary measuring *c.* 8 mm. long but without evident enlargement of the ova; that of 31st July had an ovary which measured *c.* 10 mm. and had ova up to *c.* 1 mm. diameter. This indicates nesting at the wettest time of the year. Nothing, however, was discovered about their nesting habits.

Food seemed mostly to be caught on short aerial flights, but occasionally birds were seen apparently inspecting crevices and moss on the main limbs of large forest trees. Examination of the stomach contents confirm these observations. All except one contained largish black flying hymenoptera; small black beetles were noted twice; small metallic beetles and a naked green caterpillar were noted once each.

Remarks: It is extremely unlikely that this species occurs only near Mt. Nimba; it will probably be found elsewhere in Upper Guinea, and could possibly extend to Lower Guinea. Ornithologists in forested West Africa are urged to examine carefully any "*Dicrurus ludwigii*" they see to ensure that it really is that species.

Recent revisions of this group of flycatchers (i.e. Vaurie 1953, White 1963, Hall & Moreau 1970 and Traylor 1970) include various combinations of genera within *Melaenornis*. Traylor's is the latest and includes *Dioptrornis*, *Bradornis*, *Empidornis* and *Sigelus*. Vaurie commented on the close relationship to *Fraseria*, but retained this genus because of differences in ecology (lowland forest *v.* montane forest edges, woodland and thorn savannah) and habits (feeds less on ground and occurs in groups); the only real external difference is the scaly breast. With the discovery of *M. annamarulae* these reasons are no longer valid. In the field it reminded me strongly of *F. ocreata* in habits and in calls, and was even more arboreal. It could equally be placed in either genus, only lacking the scaly breast of *Fraseria*. It therefore seems

unnecessary to retain *Fraseria*, and I propose that the two species at present assigned to it should be included in *Melaenornis*, which would now contain 13 species.

On present knowledge *M. annamarulae* would appear to have no particularly close relatives within the genus. It is tempting to link it with *M. ardesiaca* of the Congo/Uganda borders, which approaches it most closely in colour. That species, however, has a yellow (not brown) eye and differs in structural characters; more important, it is a forest edge form which occupies a lower stratum (Chapin 1953, A. Prigogine *pers. comm.*). Also, being a montane (not lowland) form remote from *M. annamarulae* a close relationship is unlikely on zoogeographic grounds. Indeed, as has been shown, *M. annamarulae* seems to be a connecting link between species hitherto considered to belong to different genera.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank the Chairman and Members of the IUCN Nimba Research Committee and the staff of the Nimba Research Laboratory, the Director and Trustees of the National Museums of Kenya, the staff of the Bird Room of the British Museum (Natural History), and in particular Mrs. B. P. Hall and C. W. Benson who examined these flycatchers with me. Without the active support of the LAMCO J. V. Op. Co. none of the work of the Nimba Research Committee would have been possible.

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Observations on the nestlings of the Goliath Heron, *Ardea goliath*, in Rhodesia

by J. Cooper and B. E. Marshall

Received 30th July, 1970

The behaviour of several species of herons of the genus *Ardea* is fairly well documented in the literature. Meyerriecks (1960) discusses that of the Great Blue Heron, *A. herodias*, and Lowe (1954) and others consider the Common or Grey Heron, *A. cinerea*. North (1963) discusses the breeding behaviour of the Black-headed Heron, *A. melanocephala*. However, relatively little is available on the behaviour of young of this genus while still on the nest.

The Goliath Heron, *A. goliath*, is as its name suggests one of the largest species in the genus. In Rhodesia it is a breeding resident throughout much of the country where suitable conditions exist though is not as common as the other species (*A. cinerea*, *A. melanocephala* and *A. purpurea*) that occur.

The Goliath Heron breeds regularly on Lake McIlwaine, an artificial lake near Salisbury, Rhodesia, where several nests were observed during 1969. The following observations come from two that contained nestlings.

When newly hatched the young are covered in greyish-white down and the iris is light green; the tarsi, feet and general skin colour being a pale lime-green and the bill a pale green-brown. At this stage the difference in size between siblings is obvious (possibly due to incubation starting with the